



# MALATHION

## BRIEF FACT SHEET

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Malathion is an organophosphate insecticide which has several known ways of poisoning humans. Organophosphates are efficiently absorbed by inhalation, ingestion and skin penetration. They are neurotoxins, from the same family of chemicals as nerve gas.

### **Acute exposures:**

Symptoms can include numbness, tingling sensations, headache, dizziness, tremor, nausea, abdominal cramps, vomiting, or diarrhea, sweating, incoordination, blurred vision, difficulty breathing or respiratory depression, and slow heartbeat. Other commonly reported early symptoms include salivation, runny nose or crying. Very high doses may result in blindness, unconsciousness, incontinence, and convulsions or fatality. *Follow all the instructions provided by the town AND air out your home as much as possible once the smell is no longer noticeable; wash with soap and/or hose down your sidewalks, doors, windows, doorknobs, lawns and vehicles. Remove your shoes before coming indoors and wash off your pets' feet after being outdoors. Drink plenty of safe water.* The breakdown products of Malathion have been shown to be more toxic than the Malathion itself.

### **Aggregate exposures and Synergistic effects:**

When 2 or more organophosphate pesticides are combined, the effect on the body can be exponentially more toxic than the effects of the individual chemicals. Health Canada has never tested the synergistic effects of pesticides. Effects of organophosphate pesticides are additive, this means that multiple exposures to a variety of chemicals can increase the severity of a reaction. Long-term disorders and diseases linked to organophosphates include numerous cancers, vision problems, respiratory disorders, depressed immune system functioning, birth defects, behavioural changes, gastrointestinal disorders and central nervous system effects. *Avoid using all lawn care chemicals or other pesticides for several days following fogging for adult mosquitoes. As much as possible, eat organic food. NEVER MIX CHEMICALS TOGETHER. Do not reuse a container that has contained another chemical.*

### **Delayed Neuropathy** (which may follow acute exposures):

Symptoms that may persist for weeks to years include weakness or paralysis of the extremities. Other delayed effects may include memory, concentration and mood problems, as well as persistent headaches, blurred vision, muscle weakness, depression, irritability, and/or development of intolerance to selected chemical odours. *Avoid exposure as much as possible.*

### **Symptoms in Children:**

Less common in children are symptoms such as slow heartbeat, muscle twitching, tearing and sweating. However, children more commonly present symptoms such as seizures, mental status changes, including lethargy and coma, flaccid muscle weakness, contracted pupils and excessive salivation. *If possible, take your children out of town for several days. Encourage indoor play. Insist that town officials hose down parks and playgrounds, change swimming pool water, etc.*

### **Resources:**

United States Environmental Protection Agency, [Recognition and Management of Pesticide Poisonings](#), 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, available electronically at [www.epa.gov/pesticides/safety/healthcare](http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/safety/healthcare)

Beyond Pesticides, [Malathion chemicalWatchFactsheet](#), [www.beyondpesticides.org](http://www.beyondpesticides.org)